SAFETY ALERT

Subj: Safety Alert Notification--Clearing M4 Carbine and M16 Series Rifles

The Army recently experienced a mishap involving a multi-piece cleaning rod being used to “rod” an M16 rifle onto a range. Multi-piece cleaning rods will readily disassemble themselves when rapidly inserted into multiple rifle barrels, as is common practice on many ranges. Rod sections inadvertently left in the bore can and will cause the rifle to explode when fired. This results in significant damage to the weapon involved, and in the most recent case, inflicted injury to the soldiers’ face, neck and eyes. Common causal factors are the use of multi-piece cleaning rods and inattention on the part of the individual responsible for “rodding” the weapons. Proper application of the US Army Risk Management Process is a continuous process that must be accomplished in order to ensure soldier safety. Leadership at all levels must ensure that range safety policies and procedures are effective, followed, and supervised.

Although there is no specific Army Regulatory requirement to rod weapons onto ranges, the Army Safety Center recognizes that it is an accepted practice across the United States Army and is mandated by many Installation Range Controls. The rodding procedure is designed as a control to detect bore obstructions and to ensure that the weapon is clear. In order to reduce the hazards presented by the use of multi-piece rods, the US Army Safety Center recommends adherence with the following control measures.

The TACOM Armament Research Development and Engineering Center advocates clearing weapons in accordance with the authorized procedures outlined in TM 9-1005-319-10. After the weapon has been cleared, a more thorough inspection may be conducted by disengaging the rear takedown pin, removing the bolt, bolt carrier and charging handle and visually inspecting the chamber and bore for any obstruction.

If your Installation Range Control allows the use of rods as a means of assuring that there are no bore obstructions, the Bronze welding rod, NSN 3439-00-244-4541, 3/16th inch diameter, 36 inches long is recommended, provided the following procedures are followed:

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a. The rods should be filed on the ends to remove any burrs or sharp edges.

b. Care should be taken when inserting the rod into the muzzle, so as to prevent damage to the muzzle crown.

c. The rod should not be allowed to slam into the face of the bolt

d. The rod must be long enough to fully penetrate the chamber and far enough into the receiver that it can be seen by the safety personnel conducting the rodding.

e. The rod must be kept clean of dirt, sand, oil, or other contaminants.

f. If an obstruction is found, the rod shall not be used to clear it. The weapon should be given to the unit armorer for clearing under the procedures stated in the appropriate technical manual.

g. If a bullet is found in the bore, request a Malfunction/Accident/Incident Report (MAIR) be submitted to the local Logistics Assistance Office.

Multi-piece rods are not recommended for any activity other than weapons maintenance. In the event that a multi-piece rod must be used for clearing, care must be taken to ensure that the rod is complete after it is withdrawn from the bore. A swab holder affixed to the end of the rod will help to facilitate this, as it provides a positive visual indicator, i.e., if the swab holder is absent, the rod is incomplete. Fluorescent or brightly colored paint at the rod tip may also assist with positive identification. In the event that a rod section is determined to be missing, and cannot be immediately accounted for, all weapons should be cleared and inspected using the procedures outlined in paragraph 3 of this document.

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